

## Marcellus Shale Update: A Conference, A City & A Tragedy

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Before the end of each day at last week's Shale Insight Conference in Pittsburgh, first MSC President Dave Spigelmyer and then WVONGA President Anne Blankenship warned the attendees to take off their conference badges once they left the Convention Center, for their personal safety. I'm sure that struck some of the participants as odd, and even a little unnerving. Owing to my religion, for me it was commonplace. Ironically if not prophetically, two days after we left the Conference, eleven of my co-religionists were massacred less than ten miles from the Convention Center by a lunatic gunman while attending Sabbath Morning Services.

As I look back upon the events of last week, it strikes me how Jewish much of the week was. I don't know how many non-Jews who attended the Conference could truly comprehend it from a Jew's perspective. Please permit me then to try to use what happened last week in Pittsburgh, first when many of us conferees were together and then the awful events after we left, to explain what it's like to walk in our religious shoes.

Very few people inside the Conference hall considered themselves, and the people they were with, inherently evil. That was not the case outside. When we attended the opening night reception, we were met by demonstrators, some dressed up like ghouls, claiming that the natural gas industry is the enemy of mankind. They believe members of that industry – meaning, you and me – are heartless profiteers, willing to suck the blood out of the environment for our short term financial gain. According to the protesters, we will endanger their lives, and indeed even our own, for our personal pecuniary interests.

In order to do so, we members of the industry will use our financial wealth and acumen to seize effective control of State, local and even national governments. We then will subvert the will of the decent, common people in favor of our own interests. While our actions may result in the ultimate destruction of the planet due to our blind pursuit of profit and power, we don't care about that. So driven are we by the prospect of financial wealth that we will risk celestial destruction for our parochial benefit.

Sound familiar?

Welcome to the world of Jews.

There is no accusation too incredible or outlandish that it can't or hasn't been leveled against the Jewish people. Last week it was that we were responsible for the immigrant caravan heading toward this country from Central America. Seriously? During the Middle Ages, Jews were blamed for Bubonic Plague. We "poisoned the wells!" Actually, we washed our hands before eating. Later Jews were accused of kidnapping Gentile children, murdering them, and using their blood to make the unleavened "matzoh" we eat during Passover. And of course less than one hundred years ago we were told we "stabbed the German State in the

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back” during World War I. Six million of my distant relatives died because of that claim.

As with us Jews, we members of the natural gas industry needn’t bother trying to argue against our critics using facts. It won’t work. To them, the case is settled. Fracking destroys communities, pipelines foul Mother Earth, and natural gas is a fossil fuel that causes climate change which will end life as we know it on our planet. So what if Yale, Penn State and the University of Cincinnati all this year published research saying they could not find a causal connection between fracking and water contamination or other environmental evils. The critics don’t want to hear it. They “know” the truth. Any arguments we make to the contrary are just smokescreens set up to confuse the people. We’re good at that you know. Besides, we will stop at nothing to achieve our evil ends.

When we confront the “enviros”, we might as well be on another planet. They want to reduce carbon emissions. We show how the increased use of natural gas has actually decreased those emissions 15% in the United States. It doesn’t matter. We’re still killing the planet in other ways. This way just makes us rich.

They want economic justice. We show how one of the leading causes of poverty in the less developed countries is the lack of a reliable energy supply, and natural gas can make that possible for hundreds of millions of people. To them, that’s just another example of how we weasel our way into other societies for our ultimately nefarious ends.

For we Jews, Israel is the most tolerant society in the Middle East with regard to the LGBTQ community. Does that impress the human rights community? Hardly. They even invented a new term, “Pinkwashing”, to describe how Israel’s treatment of the LGBTQ community is just a ruse to deflect attention from Israel’s “grievous” human rights abuses against Palestinians. I’m not kidding.

Perhaps the enviros are right. It may be that hydraulic fracturing is causing grave harm to the planet. None of us really knows, any more than we know whether or not cell phone use over extended periods of time causes damage to the human brain. We need to do the best we can, keep studying what’s happening, and make our decisions based on rational thought, study and analysis. Fracking is an industrial process, not a religion. If it turns out to be doing great harm, it should be stopped. Modern environmentalism now borders too uncomfortably on becoming a religion. As it moves closer to that state, industry members become more like Jews. It is not enough that the industry should be stopped. It (and us as its members) must also be destroyed. Any action taken against the industry in that greater cause will be justified.

For members of the industry at least there is a chance at absolution. We can always join those people of pure heart and mind, turn away from our evil fracking, and worship at the altar of “renewables”. If we do so, we will gain the eternal gratitude of the mainstream press, get invited to the swankiest parties, be celebrated as far seeing visionaries, and be a part of the eternal salvation of the planet. But please don’t ask uncomfortable questions like how will the energy created get where it needs to go, what types of non-renewable elements and other sources will be needed to get it there, and what environmental damage will be caused by the massive infrastructure needed to power our society by renewables, or if we even can. Some things you just have to take on faith. Some questions are best left unanswered, or never even asked.

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But for we Jews, there is no true salvation. Regardless of whether or not I convert, my children and even their children will be marked with the Scarlet Star of David. They always will look over their shoulder, and will always feel a little uneasy to show freely and proudly who they are among others who aren't. And they will always know that there is no accusation too ridiculous that somebody, somewhere, will still hate them for it and try to destroy them.

This week, we say "Kaddish," our memorial prayer, for eleven souls whose only crime was to believe a different way than other people. It's a terribly uncomfortable feeling. We Jews carry it around wherever we go and throughout our lives. Yet when the conferees took off those badges after we left the David Lawrence Convention Center so that we would not advertise who we were, all conferees became de facto Jews as well. Wear that Star of David well. Regardless of what the haters think, our tradition is a glorious one, and something to be eternally proud of